



A Research Strategy 2020 - 2030

This research strategy document (drafted in 2020) recognises that the College (LCC UHI) is at a comparatively early stage of staff active engagement with academic research but builds upon the successes and the experiences of the previous decade of such engagements. The strategy is divided into the following sections:

1. Defining Research and Scholarship
2. Context
3. Aims
4. Current Research Priorities
5. People
6. Resources
7. Key Performance Indicators and Monitoring

1. Defining Research and Scholarship

For the current purposes of this strategy, research is the systematic investigation of sources of evidence in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. Primary research gathers the data directly from new sources of information, while secondary research utilises the evidence generated by the primary research of others to generate new outcomes. Scholarship is defined as any academic activity that is used to update or maintain the skills and knowledge of an individual through a serious study of relevant sources.

2. Context

Lews Castle College UHI undertakes research and scholarship both as a stand-alone institution and as a constituent partner of the networked University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). All quality assurance elements, including research ethics approval, the recruitment, supervision and monitoring of research students, and the due-diligence procedures relevant to arrangements with external partnerships, are undertaken within the university regulations and as a constituent Academic Partner of the UHI. Postgraduate research students are enrolled and monitored through the UHI Graduate School, although they may be hosted, supervised and managed solely by LCC staff, or in collaboration with appropriate staff in other UHI Academic Partners or in external institutions. Currently all academic staff are expected to undertake a certain level of scholarship to maintain the currency of up-to-date knowledge in their own discipline, although only a smaller number of staff are research active. The annual professional review of academic staff is linked to the enhancement of research and scholarship by individual staff through cross-referral to the cyclic processes of curriculum development and to individual staff development activities.

3. Aims

The following are currently our high-level aims for research and scholarship.

- 3.1 To enhance the reputation of LCC by increasing the number and variety of PG Research students enrolled within the college.
- 3.2 To contribute to the socio-economic improvement of the region by attracting, retaining, and developing academic staff who can have an impact on the discipline area and/or the regional community of the UHI.
- 3.3 To provide high-quality facilities and resources to support students and staff to conduct research and scholarship that benefits the regional community.
- 3.4 To increase the visibility of LCC as a centre of advanced study by ensuring that the output of high-quality research and scholarship is disseminated and reflected in the learning and teaching activities of our staff and students.
- 3.5 To continue to secure and manage adequate external funding in order to implement the above aims.

4. Current Research Priorities

While we aim to be a research-informed institution, it is recognised that the nature of contemporary research requires a high level of commitment and dedicated resources. Consequently, strategic requirements necessitate that while scholarship is expected across the curriculum, research needs to be focussed on a small number of key areas. Currently these areas are:

- 4.1 Energy Engineering
- 4.2 Education
- 4.3 Archaeology
- 4.4 Sustainability Studies (including rural development, health, and wellbeing in rural areas)

Ad hoc research collaborations between LCC staff and external partners will also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. People

We will encourage our staff to become and remain research-active through staff development activities, mentoring opportunities, and the provision of back-up resources and services. In particular, the following actions will be emphasised and periodically reviewed to monitor progress:

- 5.1 We will seek to enable current staff the opportunity to become research-active by revising contracts and, subject to funding, adjusting workload allocations to recognise the College's research aspirations.
- 5.2 We will seek to attract a strong field of candidates for future academic posts and include the ability to undertake research activity as a highly desirable criterion for most academic appointments.
- 5.3 We will seek to enhance the attraction of external funding to enable and support staff research activities.
- 5.4 We will continue to support and seek to expand assistance for early career researchers to enhance their experience and capabilities.
- 5.5 We will identify and support emerging leaders through mentoring and through schemes such as professional benchmarking accreditation (e.g. ALPINE) and recognition (e.g. PhD registration).
- 5.6 We will seek to increase the number of staff who are eligible to supervise postgraduate research students.
- 5.7 We will seek to expand the number of postgraduate research students hosted by the College.

6. Resources

Through strengthening our close relationship with UHI research, and the Graduate School, we will seek to enhance the resources available for research and scholarship on a strategic and selective basis. Specifically, this will include:

- 6.1 The targeted use of internal funding (e.g. Staff Development Fund) to support research initiatives.
- 6.2 Strengthening our collaborations with other research colleagues across the UHI and with other Higher Education Institutes in order to build capacity and secure external funding for larger projects.
- 6.3 The development of a small number of strategic agreements with external partnerships in order to bid for larger sums of research funding.

6.4 The reinvestment of potential REF and Knowledge Transfer funding specifically to enhance LCC research activities.

7. Key Performance Indicators and Monitoring

Research KPIs will include:

KPI	Measurement
Improving the ability of the college to offer a wider range and greater number of PG research students	The number of post-graduate research students registered and hosted by LCC at the census point for the next REF
Improving the college-community liaison by increasing Knowledge Exchange	The improvement of KE metrics by the census point at the next REF
The number of academic staff holding a PhD and therefore eligible to supervise more PGR students	To have increased the number of academic staff with a doctorate by the census point at the next REF
The enhanced capacity to enrol more PGR students by supporting staff to gain a research degree	To have increased the number of staff able to supervise PG research students by the census point in the next REF
Improving the number and range of PGR students enrolled within the college	By the census point at the next REF
The number of successful post-graduate research student completions	Maintain the rate of successful completion of PGR awards by the census point at the next REF
The number of staff recognised by an HEA Fellowship, or working towards it	To have increased the number of LCC staff recognised at the census point for the next REF
The total of external research funding	To have enhanced the annual income for research and development against the total for the previous year
The revision and enhancement of approved areas of thematic research	To have expanded the disciplinary areas submitted approved by the UHI for research activity at LCC
Quality of REF impact case studies	To have improved upon the previous REF submission by the census point at the next REF